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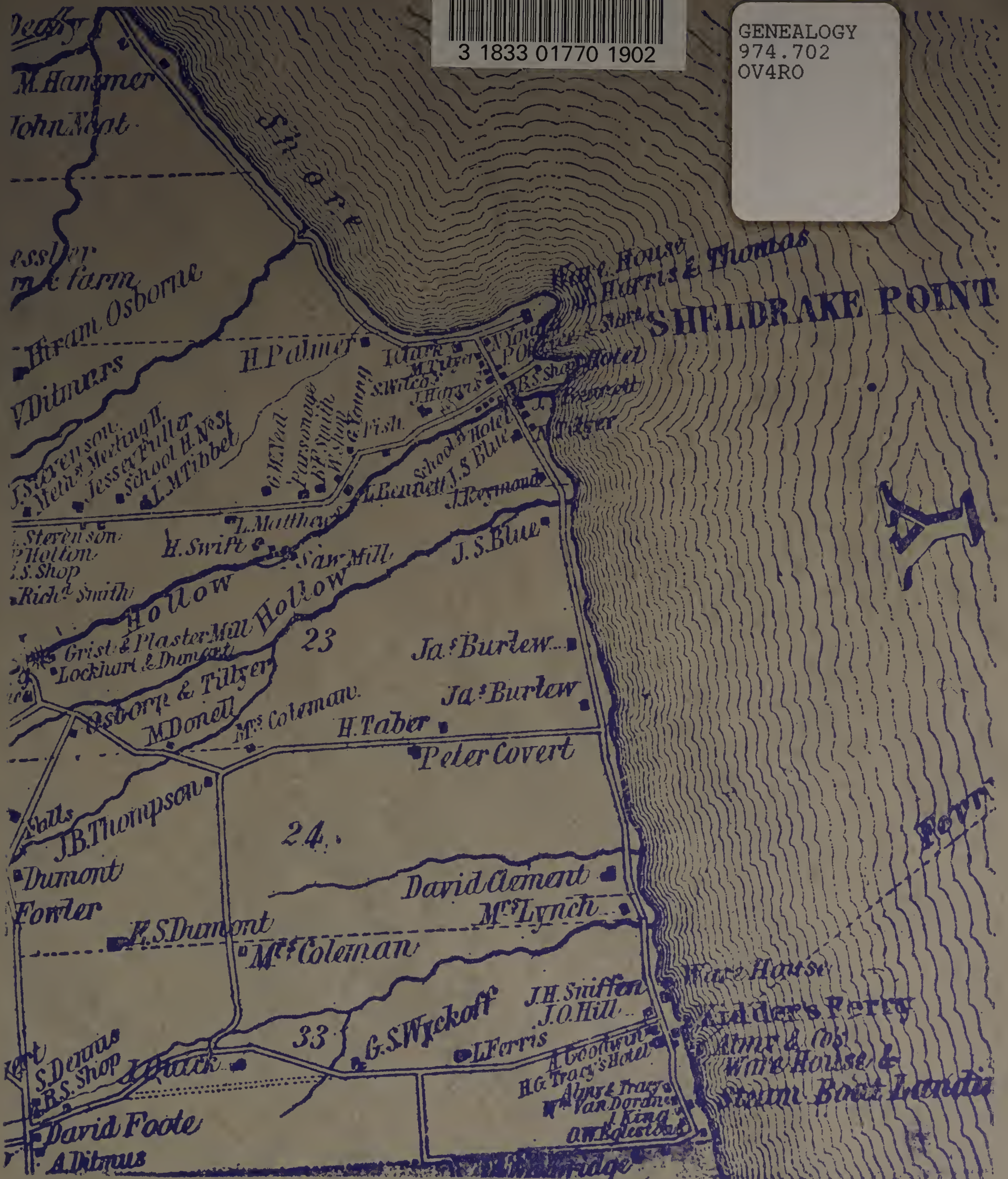
# SHELDRAKE 1789-1962

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ELSIE WILLIAMS ROBINSON



# SHELDRAKE

*Town of Ovid*

*Scale 30 rods to the inch*



SHELDRAKE, 1789-1962

A History



Elsie Williams Robinson

## PREFACE

This history of Sheldrake was first written in 1933 as a gift to my mother, Ellen D. B. Williams. Now nearly thirty years later, it is much the same except for the exclusion of the personal family information, and the addition of information accumulated over the years, and the events during the years since 1933.

Neither the first book, nor this in its present form, could have been written without the co-operation and information from many friends and relatives, and Professor John W. Wells. A list of other sources of information is in the back of this book.

E. W. R.

Sheldrake-on-Cayuga  
1962



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AIR VIEW OF SHELDRAKE FROM THE EAST  
(About 1932)

## Chapter 1

### THE INDIANS

Two hundred years ago the region between Cayuga and Seneca Lakes was inhabited by the Indians. The Cayugas, one of the Iroquois nations, were the last Indian inhabitants, but before them were the Algonquins. These were driven out of the land by the Iroquois just as later the Cayugas were driven out by Sullivan's expedition.

It is said that some early tribe — possibly Algonquin — had a village at Taughannock, and that long ago a battle took place there, in which their chief, Taghanic, was slain. At the time the white men first began to come into this region fruit trees were found in an orchard near Taughannock Falls. Yet there were no traces of a village then.

The Cayugas occupied all the land around Cayuga lake and as far west as Seneca Lake. Their neighbors on the west were the Senecas, whose territory covered what is now western New York, all the way to Niagara Falls. On the other side of the Cayugas lived the Onondagas, the Oneidas, and the Mohawks; these five were the Five Nations of the Iroquois tribe, and were known to have found an alliance as early as 1625.

In 1713 the Tuscaroras were taken in, from which time they were known as the Six Nations.

The Cayugas were the youngest of the Five Nations and their stronger neighbors advised them and took a brotherly interest in their welfare.

The councils of the Iroquois were held within the present limits of Seneca County, on the high land between the lakes. In these meetings the Mohawks and the Senecas formed a senior house, or body, and sat on one side of the council. The Oneidas and the Cayugas made up the Lower House. The Lower House could not take up a question until it was passed to them by the Upper House. If both houses approved, the decision was submitted to the Onondaga representatives, keepers of the sacred fire, for confirmation.

Formerly, the Cayugas built their villages on the higher land back from the lake shore. In that way they were more protected from their enemies. In later years, after the five nations formed their alliance, their settlements were built by the lakes and rivers. They cleared the land and planted orchards of apples, peaches, and plums; and in their gardens they grew



corn in abundance, beans, melons and squashes, potatoes, cucumbers, turnips, pumpkins and tobacco. They also had large numbers of fowl, swine, cattle and horses.

Probably the first white men to come through the region were the Jesuit missionaries, from Canada. They established a mission at Goiogouen, the capital of the Cayugas in 1656. In August 1956, the tercentenary of this event was celebrated by a Field Mass on the site. This village was located about 3½ miles south of where Union Springs now stands. In 1671 Father Pierre Raffeix, who was then in charge of this mission, wrote about Cayuga Lake as follows:

Fishing for salmon and eel is abundant. Tichero abounds with swan and geese through the winter, and in the Spring nothing is seen but continued clouds of all sorts of game.

He also wrote of the beauties of the lake and forest and reported that 1,000 deer were killed annually in the Cayuga territory between the lakes.

There seem to be several early names for Cayuga, beside the Jesuit name "Tichero" or "Tichero-lac" meaning "place of the rushes."

"Gwe-u-gweh-o-no" was an Indian name meaning "people of the mucky land," referring to the marsh at the foot of the lake.

"Ga-gwe-we" meant "to draw their boats out of the water." The lakes to the east of Cayuga have sandy shores but Cayuga's are rocky. So when the Indians wanted to take their boats up on shore, they had to lift them over the rocks; hence the name "Gagwewe."

"Ga-ju-ka" was the Moravian name.

"Ge-ju-gou-en" was the Charlevoix map.

"Gwan-gweh" was on the Thurber map.

Dearborn's soldiers referred to it as Kengah Lake. The final name, from the Indians living along the shores, Cayuga.

The Moravian missionaries (from eastern Pennsylvania), Bishop Camerhoff and Rev. David Zeisberger, passed through this territory in 1750. They wrote of their adventures and in the course of their journey mentioned "On-da-choe," which was probably Sheldrake Point. These two men crossed the lake in a bark canoe, accompanied by some Indians in another canoe, starting from Goiogouen. This was on June 27, 1750. Bishop Camerhoff wrote:



"In the middle of the lake we saw in the east and north-east Gajuka town of Sannio, about ten miles distant." (Probably Gajuka was their name for the town of Cayuga, at the north-east corner of the lake, though at other times it was called "Tichero".) "In the west a town called Ondachoe, said to be larger than Gajuka, about 15 miles from us, but which we could not visit at this time." (Sheldrake Point was 11 miles distant but was evidently the place referred to.) "We crossed the lake in about two hours, landed and then started on our way. It was intensely hot. Our course lay west by north, and west north-west. We soon entered a wilderness which we called the "Dry Dessert" because we found no water. Walked 14 or 15 miles and later came to Lake Nuquillage." (Seneca)

These Moravians seem to be the only ones to have left a record of an Indian town on Sheldrake Point, although evidences of Indian occupation have been found in the vicinity.

It seems fairly probable that there was an Indian encampment, or a great battle, above where the Cayuga Lake House stood, as arrowheads and other Indian relics have been found there; but the nearest known Indian location to Sheldrake was a fort which was located in the present Military Lot 29, about midway between the lakes. This fort was evidently a very old one at the time the first white people began to settle here. Since the Iroquois did not fight among themselves, and their boundaries by then were miles away, the Cayugas had probably not needed to use it for some time. A short distance south of the fort was an Indian burial ground, which evidently was connected with it.

In 1801 a farm was started on the site of the fortification. At that time a mound around the outside boundaries was three feet high, and was five feet wide at the top and eight feet wide at the base. The shape of the fort was elliptical and covered about 3½ acres of land. Apparently it had several gateways. Skeletons were found there, and fragments of earthenware of a dark red color, smooth on the inside but frequently ornamented on the outside. Pipes of the same material were also found, an Indian mixing bowl, and numerous arrowheads.

There is still a farm there, though newer buildings have replaced the old. All traces of the fort are gone now except an ancient well. Standing on the location it is easy to imagine what an advantageous position it was for a fort, being several feet higher on all sides than the surrounding fields.\*

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\* To reach this fort from Sheldrake, turn south from the main road at Scott's Corners. Go one mile on this road, Rock River Rd.; then turn west and continue 1½ miles. A lane leaving on the left leads to a farm on a slight elevation (1,140 feet above sea level — 760 feet above Cayuga Lake) which can be easily seen from the road. This farm is about in the middle of the former fort.

The Cayuga Indians were more farmers than warriors, and lived peacefully much of the time, hunting and caring for their gardens. The occasional white man coming through would purchase furs, paying for them by clothes or trinkets. Sir William Johnson, friend of the Indians, made out a schedule of sales for use at Fort Pitt, which was typical of all Indian trading in the early 1700's. Some of the articles for barter were as follows:

<i>Indian Goods</i>	<i>To Be Sold For</i>
Men's plain shirts	1 beaver, or a buck and a doe
Men's ruffled shirts	1 beaver, or 3 buckskins
Children's shirts	1 small beaver, or a doeskin
Penniston stockings of 1¼ yds.	1 medlin beaver or buckskin
Silver brochess	1 racoon
Large silk hanks	1 buck and a doe

There were times however when the Iroquois went forth to battle. Among their enemies were two Sioux tribes, of Virginia and North Carolina. These were the Tutelos and the Saponis. But by 1753 they had ceased their warfare and these two tribes either migrated or were captured, and brought to the Cayuga country. They settled in two villages: one, the Saponis in Pony Hollow, and the other, the Tutelos, three miles from the south end of the lake, on the Inlet opposite Buttermilk Falls. This Tutelo town was called "Coreorgonel" meaning "where we keep the pipe." This tribe intermarried with the Cayugas, after which they were called the "Tadarigroons" meaning "those with whom we married."

The Cayugas did not live in tepees, but in houses of bark called wigwams. Sometimes these houses would be communal dwellings and would hold from five to twelve families each. The wigwams had openings at the top of the roof as vents for the fires beneath. The Cayugas were not in the habit of moving about except as the ground refused to yield or the hunting became poor; then they would move their whole village to a new location, often only a few miles distant.

So they lived till after the Revolutionary War. Then, the whites wanting more land, and various Indians having fought with the British against the Colonists, as well as occasionally molesting groups of whites, General Washington ordered Sullivan to go through the Lake region and dispose of all the Indians. The Indians were forewarned of the coming march, so they left their villages hurriedly and traveled to Niagara. There they stayed, for their orchards, gardens, and homes were systematically and almost totally destroyed by the soldiers of Sullivan's army.



## Chapter 2

### COLONEL DEARBORN'S EXPEDITION

When Sullivan's army started north to reach the land of the Cayuga Indians, they came first to Newtown (near Elmira) and from there to Catherine's Town (Watkins). Then they continued their way along the east shore of Seneca Lake, destroying Indian villages, orchards and gardens as they went.

One of the nights during their march they camped at Appletown — now Kendaia — near the shore of Seneca Lake. While there several of the cattle belonging to the army strayed away. This was on September 6, 1779. Some of the soldiers were sent after them, and finally located the lost animals near Cayuga Lake. During the hunt, the men came to an Indian village called Swahyawana, and destroyed it. This village was on a hill and commanded a fine view of the lake. It was probably located about two miles south of East Varick.

The men having returned with the lost cattle, the expedition continued the march northward. They spent a short time in the vicinity of Kanadasaga (Geneva) and then prepared to return south. General Sullivan divided his forces, and sent Lt. Col. William Butler with a force of 600 men to lay waste the towns on the east side of Cayuga Lake. He also sent Col. Henry Dearborn to destroy all the Indian settlements which might be found on the west side of the lake.

Col. Dearborn and his detachment left the main army September 21st, at 8 A. M. They went east to Skoi-yase (later Waterloo), then south-east till they reached Cayuga Lake. There they camped the first night at a point between the present location of Canoga and Cayuga Lake Park.

The next day, the 22nd, they marched five miles and came to the town which had been destroyed by the soldiers when they were hunting the lost cattle. Half a mile further they came to a creek where there were three houses. They burnt these and also a quantity of corn. This was directly across the lake from where Aurora now is.

Five miles farther — which would probably be back of Elm Beach — the detachment found a hut occupied by three squaws and a crippled Indian boy. Two of the squaws were taken as captives; the other squaw and the boy were left. Three miles beyond this they found another hut and a field of corn. Both were destroyed. This was probably near Sheldrake. The party encamped four miles farther up the lake, having marched seventeen miles that day.



The march of September 23rd was one of great fatigue. Starting at sunrise, without any path, or map for guide, they advanced over a very rough country which was so thickly covered with bushes that it was difficult to find a way through. After traveling about nine miles, they found themselves at the end of a long cape (Taughannock), which they had mistaken for the end of the lake.

Apparently Dearborn and his men followed a course near the route of the lake boulevard, though at times they were nearer the lake. There are so many ravines and ridges between Elm Beach and Taughannock that it is no wonder they found it hard going.

From Taughannock, they continued eight miles to the end of the lake, and encamped. On the 24th they started again at sunrise and soon struck an old path which led to some huts and cornfields. Supposing that he was near an important Indian town, which was reported to be at the head of the lake, Col. Dearborn divided his force into small parties, and sent them in different directions to look for it. In their search several scattered houses and cornfields were found and destroyed.

At length the town was found and proved to be Coreorgonel, the village of the Tutelos on the inlet south of the present site of Ithaca. It contained 25 houses. After entirely destroying this village, Col. Dearborn and his men went over the hill to Catherine's Town, hoping there to rejoin General Sullivan. But Sullivan's army had already gone through, so Dearborn's regiment continued to Fort Reed (Elmira) and joined the others there.

In his report to General Washington, on the Dearborn Expedition, General Sullivan wrote:

Dearborn's army destroyed six Cayuga villages, cornfields, orchards and gardens, and captured an Indian and three squaws.

In the main army when they traveled along Seneca Lake, was a soldier named Wilson who was so impressed with the beauty of the country that he carved his initials and the date on a tree, hoping some day to come back to that place. He never did, but his son, having heard his father tell of his experiences, came back and settled in this new country, and found the tree with the initials near Lodi. He carefully cut off the piece of bark and saved it. This bark, with the initials and date, is still in the possession of one of Mr. Wilson's descendants.

## Chapter 3

### THE FIRST SETTLERS

Sullivan's expedition took place in 1779. Not much was done about opening up the new country between the lakes until 1789 and 1790. Then treaties were signed at Albany whereby the Indians were allowed tracts of several square miles on either side of the north end of Cayuga Lake. Simeon DeWitt, surveyor-general of New York State, was directed to survey the rest of the land formerly occupied by the Cayuga Indians. Money was scarce among the colonists in those days, so this land was to be divided into lots averaging 200 to 600 acres each. These were called "Military Lots" and were given to some of the outstanding soldiers who had fought in the Revolutionary War. It took some time to complete the survey, and many of the soldiers tired of waiting for their portions, so they sold to others their rights to the land.

Sheldrake Point, and the land back of it as far as the north-south road just east of the former Lehigh Valley tracks, is Ovid Military Lot No. 14. The north boundary of this lot runs at right angles from this road down to the lake, at a point where the ravine about one-fourth mile north of the point runs into the lake at the Frusty farm. The south boundary starts at the lake a short distance south of Sheldrake Creek and extends west until it joins the east-west road from Sheldrake four-corners up the hill. The line then follows this road till it joins the north-south road mentioned above, which forms the west boundary of the lot.

This lot was sold to Peter Sherman by the soldier to whom it was first allotted.

The first settler in the region now covered by Seneca County was a man named Job Smith, who settled within the present boundaries of Seneca Falls in 1787. At that time Geneva was only the ruins of the Indian village of Kanadesaga.

The next settler was probably Andrew Dunlap. He had been a teamster in the Revolutionary War and lived in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. When the soldiers returned home after Sullivan's expedition, they gave such glowing descriptions of the country through which they had passed that Dunlap decided he would like to see it. So early in May 1789 he and six other men journeyed north and built a log cabin south-west of where Ovid now is. Then they cleared the land, planted winter wheat, and in the fall returned to Pennsylvania.



The following spring Dunlap and five of the other men brought their families to the new location. The early settlers from Pennsylvania in those days usually came in covered wagons to Newtown (Elmira), then to the head of Seneca or Cayuga Lake, and thus into the new country. As time went on, others settled in the land, mostly Yankees, Scotch, Irish and Germans from Pennsylvania, and Dutch from New Jersey.

The first child born in Ovid township was David Dunlap, son of Andrew February 2, 1793, and the first death in Seneca County was George Dunlap, a brother of Andrew. A later George Dunlap, who lived in a house in Sheldrake south of Sheldrake Creek (now occupied by the Dochartys), was a descendant of Andrew Dunlap.

In the spring of 1793 three of the young men among the settlers with Andrew Dunlap wanted to be married. But there was no priest, parson or justice between the lakes. So the three couples crossed Seneca Lake together in a skiff and "proceeded to Esquire Parker who united them in the bonds of matrimony: whereupon they returned rejoicing." The marriage certificate of one couple read thus:

This is to certify that Mr. Joseph Wilson and Miss Anna Wyckoff was joined together in marriage in Jerusalem, in the County of Ontario, on the 3rd day of April A. D. 1793 by James Parker, Just. Peace.

The other couples were Abraham A. Covert and Catherine Covert, and Enoch Stewart and Jane Covert.

By this time settlers were moving into the region quite rapidly. In 1790 a road north to Geneva was built and became "a great highway for immigration." It was called a "State Road" and followed very much the course of the Ithaca-Geneva highway.

The settlers planted corn, wheat, rye, turnips, pumpkins, and potatoes. They tried raising flax but found it exhausted the land. Peaches grew well, and about 1800 they started raising sheep. All the settlements had poultry, and a great deal of hay, grain, potatoes and apples was grown. There was a great variety of wild food, especially along the lake in the fall and spring: swans, geese, and ducks in large numbers. In the lake salmon was abundant, also white fish and several kinds of pike. Eels and perch were had for the effort. Every stream was filled with trout. The wild passenger pigeon had been netted by the Indians in enormous quantities for over a hundred years. The mastodon and mammoth, the bison and elk, which formerly roamed here, had given way to the wolf, cat, coon, fox, lynx, bear, some beaver and an abundance of deer. The rattlesnake was prevalent but the increasing number of swine caused its disappearance. Grouse, woodcock, quail, squirrel, and rabbit came plentifully into the new clearings.



In making the survey of the land between the lakes, a certain number of military lots constituted a town. These towns were named by Simeon DeWitt, who selected Greek and Roman names so that they would be different from those on Post Offices in New England and eastern New York. Thus, Ovid, Romulus, Ulysses and Junius, all named by DeWitt. Hayt's Corners received its name from early settlers named Hayt who came to the region in 1806. Varick was named after Col. Richard Varick, a revolutionary statesman and patriot.

In 1797 Jeremiah Rappleye brought his family from New Jersey, up the Hudson, through the Mohawk Valley, frequently transporting boats and cargo overland from one point of water to another, thus reaching the outlets of Seneca River. In June, after a journey of 35 days, they landed on the shore of Cayuga Lake in a wild uninhabited spot. He settled in the country a short distance back from there at a point between the present location of Interlaken and the lake shore.

The township of Ovid was formed March 5, 1794, at which time it was organized as a town of Onondaga County when that town was set off from Herkimer County. In 1817 the town of Covert was taken from Ovid and later Lodi was taken from part of Covert and part of Ovid. These three townships, Covert, Ovid and Lodi, comprise the original military grant town of Ovid, which contained 100 600-acre military lots.

In 1797 the New York State Legislature authorized the construction of a bridge across the north end of the lake, to take the place of the "canoe ferry." It was built at a cost of over \$20,000, in those days a large sum, and was over a mile in length. When it was finished in 1800 it was said to be the longest bridge in the world. This bridge was of defective construction, and the whole thing gave way in 1808. The plank, railing and stringers floated off down to the marsh at the foot of the lake. The bends could be seen years after, lying at the bottom of the lake.

A second bridge was built in 1813, and then in 1833 a third one was built just north of the second bridge while that was still usable. The rates of toll over this third bridge showed the variety of its travelers: toll for a carriage with 4 horses was 10 shillings, (\$1.25); 2 horses, 8s; 2-horse wagon 4s. 6d.; hogs, 2 or 3 cents a head. Tolls of \$300 to \$500 were taken daily. A sight of this bridge in those days without a traveler was a rarity. It was used constantly until 1842 after which it had competition from the railroad which had been built. The bridge was finally abandoned in 1857.

On Seneca Lake the town of Lancaster was started. This town was later Bailey Town, then Ovid Landing, and finally Willard. By 1800 Ovid had become the most populous township in the present territory of Seneca County. At that time mail was brought from Geneva once a week by carrier on horseback.

There were many residents in the town at that time whose names are still familiar in this vicinity. There were Coverts, Rappleyes, Thomases, Bryants, Bodines, Wyckoffs, Kinnes, Quicks, Scotts, Ferrises, Wheelers and Biggs.

The following record of the earliest known assembly in the county is interesting:

At a Town Meeting held in the Town of Ovid in the County of Onondaga on Tuesday the first day of April, 1794, for chusing Town Officers, the Freeholders and inhabitants of said town, being meet, proceeded to their choise, as Follows, viz: Silas Halsey, Supervisor; Joshua Wyckoff, Town Clerk; Elijah Kinne, Abraham Covert, and George Fassett, Overseers of Highways; Henry Scivinton, Daniel Everts, Elijah Kinne, John Selah, James Jackson, and Samuel Chiswell, Fence Viewers; Thomas Covert, Poundmaster; also voted that every fence be 4½ feet high to be accounted sufficient; also voted that Hogs run free Commoned for the year Insuing. The above Town-Meeting, held the first day of April, in the presence of me.

Silas Halsey, Justice of the Peace

Other early town meetings voted, in 1804, "a bounty of 5 dollars per head on wolves;" in 1806, "Voted that hoggs under thirty pounds shud not runn without yoaks on the highways." 1807, "Voted, that all fences shall be 5 feet high and 2 feet from the ground." 1809, "Voted, that no man shuld let Canerda thistles go to seed on his farm, under penalty of five dollars." 1810, "Voted, that any person keeping more than one dog, shall pay a tax of 50 cents a year."

During this time the counties were again divided. So while Ovid was in Onondaga County in the beginning, and later, when Onondaga was divided, in Cayuga County, by 1804 that county was divided and Seneca County was formed, with Ovid village as capitol of the county. In 1806 the Ovid Court House was built, and the park laid out in front.

The village of Farmer, now Interlaken, was in the town of Covert, and was settled some time after the village of Ovid. Originally there was talk of locating Farmer a mile east of where it is now, at the corners known then as Jugtown; but some of the influential citizens persuaded the inhabitants that a location farther up the hill would be more desirable. The village of Farmer, also called Farmerville, later was renamed Interlaken.

There were several log houses in Farmer when the first frame house was built in 1815. This house was later covered with clapboards, modernized.

and is believed to be the same one now located on the south-east corner of the road going east from Interlaken in the north end of town. Originally it was used for a store, later as "McCall's Tavern," and is now a private home.

An interesting story is told of one of the early settlers. This man was Samuel Weyburn. Reports differ on the location of his cabin; some say it was at Taughannock; others — and these seem more logical — by a ravine about a mile north-east of Farmerville, below what is now the boulevard, on the Morgan Road.

This man shot at and wounded a bear one evening, but it escaped into the ravine. The next morning when Weyburn went out to feed his cattle, he heard his dog barking in the ravine. So, taking his pitchfork, he went to the place where he found the dog in a contest with the bear on a narrow shelf of rock about half way down the side of the ravine. He immediately took part in the fight to assist the dog, and presently the bear seized Weyburn's arm in its jaws. At this point both man and bear began to roll over and over to the bottom, a distance of 40 feet, in an embrace altogether too close for comfort, at least to the man. Fortunately, when they landed in the water at the bottom of the ravine, the man was on top, and by ramming his arm, still in the bear's mouth, down his throat, he succeeded in holding the bear's head under water and drowning him. Weyburn was severely wounded but survived many years, though permanently scarred; he was always known after his fight as the "man who fought the bear."



## Chapter 4

### BOATING ON CAYUGA LAKE

The Indians, in their bark canoes, held undisputed authority on Cayuga, the longest of the central New York lakes, for many hundreds of years. But about 1790, after the settlers had started living in the region, a ferry service was started at the north end of the lake. This ferry was for the purpose of "connecting both ends of the state road," which was the Niagara Trail that ran east and west, from Albany to Fort Niagara, then the western outpost of the region. The ferry service ran parallel to the bridge, and was used when the bridge was not usable, and after it was abandoned in 1857. Its landing points were Cayuga on one side and Bridgeport on the other; a ferry ran until the 1880's.

In 1798 Captain Abel Frisbie established regular communications between the east and west sides of the lake, at about the location later of Aurora. He transported passengers and mail by rowboat or other primitive craft. It landed on one side at Brown's, or Ayer's Landing, and at Snook's Landing on the other.

About 1800 Dr. Jonas C. Baldwin of Ovid bought a piroque (a canoe-like boat) at Baileytown on Seneca Lake, and brought it around to Shel-drake Point to use as a ferry boat. He probably found it impractical for regular use, as he soon sold it.

In 1816 ferry service was started between Kidders and Northville as it was then called. Northville, directly across the lake from Kidders, later was called (in 1840) Ogden's Ferry, or Fort Ogden. In Northville lived a man named King who owned various boats and had ferry rights, and in time the place adopted his name, thereafter being called King's Ferry. The ferry between these places was called the *A. M. Shaw*, and was built by H. C. Tracy, who lived in the corner house next to the hotel at Kidders.

This ferry ran for some time, till Tracy and Peter Fish had the *Polly Ann* built. This boat was named for Mrs. Tracy, who was Polly, and for Mrs. Fish, whose name was Ann. James Bennett, the boat-builder at Shel-drake, built both the *Polly Ann* and its successor, the *Busy Bee*.

The *Polly Ann* had a sail but it also carried a horse on board, whose continuous tread turned the side wheels. Captain Stillwell ran this boat till 1882, when Captain "Jim" Quick bought it. By this time steamboats had proved their worth, so in 1884 Captain Quick had the *Busy Bee* built. This had two sails, and side wheels, but steam was always kept up so the boat would be sure to run.

When Captain Quick was running the *Polly Ann*, and for some years also on the *Busy Bee*, all the mail for Kidders and vicinity was brought





THE BUSY BEE, WITH OLD KIDDERS WAREHOUSE (About 1885)



THE OLD WAREHOUSE ON SHELDRAKE POINT, FROM THE COVE (About 1885)



across the lake from King's Ferry. The contract called for mail to be brought four days a week. So, if the weather was very bad one day, and no passengers had to be transported, it could be left till the next day. This mail carrying brought in about \$100 a year to Captain Quick.

When the Lehigh Valley Railroad built their line through Farmerville, mail was taken off there, and anyone going to town from Kidders would bring it down. Mail was also brought from Ithaca on the steamers *Kate Morgan* and *T. D. Wilcox*, to the various towns along the west shore.

For 18 years Captain Quick brought the mail across the lake, winter and summer, and ferried passengers back and forth. A big board at King's Ferry was used as a signal to Captain Quick, who lived by the shore at Kidders. Painted black on one side, and white on the other, the white side of the board was exposed to view when passengers were waiting to be transported. When the black side was showing, Captain Quick knew there was no hurry about crossing the lake.

The ferryboats never tipped over, but sometimes the lake was so rough that the *Busy Bee* could not land. Then the little dinghy on the deck would be launched a few feet from shore, Captain Quick would give it a push, and interested spectators on shore would pull the boat and passengers in through the waves.

Several times the *Busy Bee* was strengthened when it began to show its age. But in 1914 it was getting so old that it just ceased to run, and ever since then it has rested by the shore at Kidders where, when the lake is low, the framework of the boat is plainly visible.

Sheldrake canal boats plied the lake for many years. James Bennett and his son Wirt used to build them, down by Sheldrake Cove. Cadmus, who lived in the house by the Sheldrake bridge, also built canal boats, and owned several. John Tillyer, who formerly lived in the house across the creek and below the road from Cadmus, ran some of these boats. These canal boats carried a variety of freight. It was a usual sight to see eight or ten boats pass in a day, their cargoes consisted of lumber, potash, flour, butter, pork, leather, plaster, and other articles of manufacture, also salt, iron, coal and grain.

All this time Sheldrake was a lively village and was well known as a steamboat landing and shipping point. Two warehouses stored grain for the canal boat trade, the one on the point being a conspicuous landmark up and down the lake. A long, high wharf extended out into the cove from this warehouse, where boats could load their cargoes. The other, a smaller warehouse, was on the south side of the cove. Often the canal boat crew would spend the night tied up in the cove; at such times the night air was filled with singing, sounds of dancing and general merrymaking.

The *Ithaca Journal* on February 4, 1852 stated that "The Forest City steamer, laid up on the 19th ultimo, on account of ice, will, we understand, resume her trips in a few days." On the 11th the paper wrote that the boat commenced her trips. April 12 of that same year the *Ithaca Chronicle* stated that "The Forest City is again out to do the towing on the lake, leaving the Dodge for the accomodation of passengers." The *William E. Dodge* left Ithaca at 7 A. M., and Cayuga on the return at 12 noon; her captain was E. Bucksbee.

In 1855 the Cayuga & Susquehanna R. R. Company purchased the entire steamboat interest. The *Simeon DeWitt* had been rebuilt and named the *William E. Dodge*. Captain Wilcox repurchased the boats from the railroad company and controlled them till 1862 when Alonzo B. Cornell purchased them. Captain Wilcox again took them over within a few years. and remained whole or part owner till his death in 1884. For the next 30 years they were under various managements, one being the Cayuga Lake Transportation Company.

During Captain Wilcox's ownership several boats were built for the Cayuga Lake trade. The *Kate Morgan* in 1855, the *Sheldrake* in 1857, the *Aurora* in 1859, the *T. D. Wilcox* in 1861, the *Ino* in 1864 and the *Frontenac* in 1866.

The *Frontenac* was the largest of the Cayuga Lake boats, being 135 feet on its keel, and 22 feet beam. The engine was 27 horsepower and its estimated speed was 15 miles an hour. It was built at a cost of \$50,000. It had a tall smokestack near the front, and a pilot house in front on the upper deck; two huge paddle wheels on each side of the boat were enclosed and the name FRONTENAC in large letters was painted across the base of the round wheel covering. Behind these were two large covered decks, and in front of the boat was another uncovered deck. Inside was a dining room where regular meals were served.

When the big boat was about to land, the ropes were thrown out and fastened around the spiles on the dock. After unloading and taking on passengers, the captain would ring his bell, the ropes were thrown back to the deck, the wheels churned the water, and off she started for the next port.

The *T. D. Wilcox* (later renamed the *Ithaca*), and the *Ino*, as well as the *Frontenac*, were well filled with passengers each trip for many years. Not only did the boats make regular trips up and down the lake, but they — particularly the *Ithaca* — ran excursions. Those were the days of Sunday School picnics. Regularly, each June, one of the big boats would be chartered for the day, and a crowd of old people and young would go to Frontenac Beach or Sheldrake Point for their annual Sunday School picnic.

Some of the earlier boats went to East Varick, and other ports not touched by the later boats. The *Seneca County Courier*, in the edition of





THE FRONTENAC, AT ITHACA



THE FRONTENAC, LEAVING SHELDRAKE, 1907





August 7, 1879, had this interesting entry:

The T. D. Wilcox did not make a landing at East Varick yesterday on the excursion trip as the boat was so heavily loaded and the wind being contrary, the Captain considered it unsafe to attempt it. About 100 were in waiting at that point to take the boat. The action of the captain in not wishing to overload his boat for the sake of a few additional dollars is to be commended. The G. A. band cleared about \$200.

During the summer season the lake boats evidently were the popular means of travel, for a notice in another newspaper in the fall of 1880 mentioned that "since the steamboats have stopped running on Cayuga Lake the fare on the Cayuga R. R. has been increased."

The steamers traveling up and down the lake had a zig-zag route. So, while the lake is 40 miles long, they must have easily traveled 60 miles going from one end to the other. A time-table for the *Frontenac* in 1901 gives this itinerary:

Going north:	Lv Ithaca (Renwick)	9:20 A. M.
	*Glenwood	9:35
	*Ladoga	9:50
	*Taughannock	10:00
	Trumansburg (Frontenac Beach) #	10:15
	*Atwaters Glen	10:40
	Kidder's Ferry #	10:55
	Sheldrake #	11:15
	Aurora #	11:45
	*Farley's #	12:10
	Union Springs #	12:20
	*Bull's Grove #	12:50
	Cayuga #	1:00

Sunday boat leaves Renwick at 11 A. M.

\* Signal landings

# Summer resorts

Meals and lunches served on boat

Many a time when visitors were coming from Ithaca to spend the day at Sheldrake, we would go to Sheldrake Point to see how soon the boat would come. Though it was due at 11:15 A. M., there would be days when the rough water or large number of passengers on board would cause it to come a bit late. So, if the boat had just left Atwaters for Kidders, we knew there was about half an hour in which to go down to the landing and be there in plenty of time to see the boat come in. This was one of the excitements of the day. Then, in the afternoon at about 4:30, we would watch for the boat to come from the north around Long Point. When that happened, it was time for our visitors to pick up their belongings and go leisurely down to the dock for the return trip. When the *Frontenac* and the *Ithaca* were running on the lake, the *Frontenac* would go north in the

morning and back in the afternoon, while the *Ithaca* started from Cayuga and took the opposite trip. They usually passed between Sheldrake and Kidders.

It may be noted here that Cayuga Lake is about 3 miles wide at Aurora, its widest part; its deepest point, off Interlaken Beach, is 435 feet, and its surface is officially 381 feet above sea level.

At the time the Cayuga Lake House was in its prime, regattas were often held on the lake. Some of these — with 15 or more boats racing — would start and, after following the course of a big circle, end up in front of the hotel. Union Springs and Glenwood were also popular for ragattas.

There were numerous steam yachts on the lake. The Cayuga Lake House for one season ran the *Florence* for the use of its guests. Robert Darragh of Sheldrake had a very fine yacht, the *Laura Darragh*, named for his wife. This boat was completed just before Mr. Darragh's death and only ran on the lake for a year. The Westinghouse's *Clara*, and Mr. Morris' *Lucy T.* were also well known boats.

The *Frontenac* had a long life on the lake, running each year from early summer till late fall. Formerly running as late as the middle of October, in later years, as passengers decreased, its season was shortened. Finally, in 1907, the *Frontenac* met a tragic end. On its regular trip Saturday July 27, a very strong wind was blowing. The boat was nearing Aurora but because of the gale it was unable to make a landing. About 70 people were on board and many more were waiting at the dock, intending to board the steamer. Suddenly smoke was discovered coming from the pilot house. Captain Brown ordered the pumps turned on, and the crew fought the flames for several minutes before it was seen that it was impossible to save the vessel in that gale, and the pilot was ordered to beach the boat, turning in at Dill's Cove, one-half mile south of Farley's Point. Life boats were afire, so life rafts and life preservers were quickly brought out and adjusted, and as soon as the steamer stopped, in 7 feet of water and about 200 feet from shore, passengers began to jump overboard. Some had to be pushed off the vessel, by this time almost a seething mass. Although it was only about 50 feet to where the water was shallow enough for a grown person to walk in, eight persons were drowned. After the fire was out, only the boiler and a portion of one paddle box remained above the water.

The lake traffic from then was steadily on the decline. The boats *Mohawk* and *Iroquois* of the Brown Transportation Company, ran for a while but passengers were few. Then boats were run just between Ithaca and Glenwood for a few years. Since then the lake has been gradually taken over by individually owned boats — motor boats, sailboats, rowboats with their patient fishermen, and canoes. Also by water-skis, which are becoming frequent in summer.



## Chapter 5

### THE BEGINNING OF SHELDRAKE VILLAGE

Peter Sherman, having purchased his land at Sheldrake Point, built a house a short distance above the corner where the Sheldrake road turns up the hill along the cliff. This house faced south, with its back to the lake. An old well still on the property was located just in front of his house. This well now has a column over it, placed there by the present owners, Prof. and Mrs. John Wells. A chipmunk has a home beneath the column.

Several others settled on Peter Sherman's lot at about the same time. These were Benjamin Waldron, and Simon and James Wheeler and their father.

As more people gradually settled nearby, Mrs. Sherman, or "Aunt Patty" as she was called, thought there should be a Sunday School. So she organized a class, and for some time it met in a large room upstairs in the Sherman house. This was all well and good. But as time went on, it was said that this big room was also very popular on week-day nights for the young people to dance in, which they did unbeknown to many of their parents.

At any rate, Aunt Patty's Sunday School class prospered and at the same time Uncle Peter invited the people to a church service "at early candle-light" which was conducted by itinerant ministers and sometimes by Uncle Peter himself. In 1812 this group known as the Ovid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church; this was probably the second M. E. Church to be formed in Seneca County, as one had been started in Townsendville in 1809. In 1831 the Sheldrake group had grown sufficiently to necessitate a church building, so one was erected up the hill from the Sheldrake four-corners just before the jog in the road known as Stevenson's Corners. Peter Sherman and his wife were two of the most prominent members; and there were also Thomas Osborn, James Kidder (from whom Kidder's Ferry got its name), James Wheeler and Isaac Blew among the parishioners.

All this time roads were being gradually built. Mail was carried once a week by stage, between Geneva and Ithaca. This stage followed the turnpike, whose windings were accounted for largely on the ground that it followed the lines of heaviest subscription. The present highway (96) between the two cities now follows much the same route of the early turnpike. By 1810 the Ithaca and Geneva Turnpike was incorporated and then the stages carried mail daily. The stages continued till 1873 when the Ithaca-Geneva Railroad started running. The stage line was owned by Jesse Grant & Son and later by Chauncey L. Grant & Co. of Ithaca. They also had stage routes to Catskill, Jersey City and Newburg, and west to Buffalo. These stages must have been a thrilling sight with their "4 horse, thoroughbrace coaches" when the driver would mount his box, and sound

his horn as a signal to start. Part of the time the stage fare from Ithaca to New York via Catskill was only \$1.50 because of so much competition!

The map (front cover) showing Sheldrake Point and the surrounding country is taken from Gibson's map of Seneca County published in 1852, which is apparently one of the oldest printed maps of the county. The Methodist Meeting-House shows clearly, and the school house below it is in the same location as at present, though no longer used as a school house.

Nearer Sheldrake Point on the map the house occupied by I. Clark is the one originally built by Peter Sherman. Along the cliff road there is a noticeable lack of houses, the one belonging to Horatio Palmer (built by his father Levi Palmer) is the farmhouse (now Mrs. Frusty's) just south of the bridge north of Sheldrake, the original house being the back part of the present building.

Settling on the next Military Lot to Peter Sherman's (Lot #23) was Samuel Blue. He came from New Jersey in 1807 and built a log cabin where the Cayuga Lake House later stood. His only son was John S. Blue who built a log cabin beside the creek just south of the Sheldrake bridge.

On the map J. S. Blue is conspicuous in two places. One location is where his father lived. The other nearer the Sheldrake four-corners, is the farm house which was built to take the place of the log cabin by the creek. This is the same farm house, but with additions later, now standing. The Blues certainly needed to build a larger house, for they had 22 children (18 of whom lived) although the father, J. S. Blue, died at the age of 46.

The James Burlews also were among the earliest settlers. They too came from New Jersey. Soon after they settled here, Mrs. Burlew's mother sent her a Brussels carpet. That was such a luxurious thing in those days that all the people about called on the Burlews quite promptly to see it.

On Sheldrake Point the warehouse was built in which to store grain to be shipped on the canal boats. This shipping industry soon made Sheldrake quite a busy place and more houses were built. John Harris and Waterman Thomas, who owned the warehouse, also had a store and post-office in the square white building on the north-east corner of the Sheldrake four-corners.

On the corner by the lake lived Nelson Young in the house which his father had built. This must have been a busy corner, as farmers would drive down by there to the warehouse, and along the shore between Mr. Young's and the warehouse, fishermen would bring in their catch.

Across the road from Young lived M. Tillyer, a daughter of John Tillyer of the canal boats. John's son, N. Tillyer, lived farther south, beyond



Sheldrake Creek, on property later acquired by Jacob Cram.

Up the hill lived Gilleas Young. He was a carpenter. Near him was a wagon shop; up the hill by the "mill pond" was a grist and plaster mill. Opposite the wagon shop lived Lucius Bennett. He was a builder and contractor. Beside building his own house, he built the "Gothic House" for Waterman Thomas, in recent years owned by the Dunwoody family. This, on the map, is opposite the school house. That school house is our present Town Hall, which for some years was used as a school. Lucius Bennett, with his son, also built the house just north of Sheldrake Creek on the north-south road through Sheldrake, and many other houses in the vicinity.

Farther up the hill, across the road from Lucius Bennett's house, was G. W. Neal, who lived in the little red house which was occupied for many years by Mrs. Susie May.

The Sheldrake Hotel was built by a man named Quigley, about 1851. Back of the hotel, next to the creek, was a blacksmith shop. Along the road, between J. S. Blue's place and Jas. Burlew's, was a school house. This does not show on the map, but was located at the top of the bank between the road and the lake (just about opposite the entrance to the present Bartow home). The house labeled "J. Reymond" stood in the field between J. S. Blue's farmhouse and the present Misker home. The Reymonds lived there only a few years and then moved to Ovid.

At Kidders the Quick family had a farm up the hill, and later Captain Jim, of ferryboat fame, moved down by the lake to be nearer his boat. Tracy, who had the *Polly Ann*, had a hotel at Kidders, the same one there now. The Bainbridge house is the same now, and is still occupied by members of that family. At Kidders also lived J. H. Sniffen, who was a boat builder. On the shore in front of his house was a huge warehouse. Another warehouse, in front of the church at Kidders, was knocked down by the ice in the lake, in 1885.

It was in 1852 that the Sodus Bay Railroad project was organized, with the idea of running a railroad from the town of Spencer to Seneca Falls, connecting in those places with lines into Pennsylvania, and north to Lake Ontario. Rights of way were procured, track graded, many culverts and some bridges built. Railroad crossing signs were even put up. Everything was practically finished except laying the iron tracks, but in two years the whole project was abandoned. The old grade can still be seen in places.

In the summer of 1856 there was excitement at Sheldrake as the Commissioners, appointed to designate a site in the Town of Ovid for the proposed State Agricultural College, looked over possible locations. Two tracts were particularly attractive, one west of Ovid, the other near Sheldrake. The latter was strongly supported by a group of citizens of Ithaca, Trumansburg, Covert, Farmer, Lake Ridge, King Ferry, Aurora, and elsewhere, who are said to have offered a donation of \$25,000 if Sheldrake



were chosen. The site west of Ovid was selected, and late in 1860 the school was opened, but closed after three terms owing to the Civil War. In 1865 its plant was taken over by the State for the new Willard State Hospital, and the idea of the Agricultural College was metamorphosed into Cornell University. One wonders what Sheldrake would be like had it been picked by the Commissioners.

Two well-known cults had their beginnings not far from this locality. In 1830 Joseph Smith, who lived in Fayette, started the idea of Mormonism. In 1848 Spiritualism originated, when spirit rappings were discovered in the family of John Fox at Hydesville.

There were several newspapers in Seneca County at that time. The interest of the inhabitants was evident by the fact that the paper having the largest circulation was a weekly called *The Lily Temperance*.

In 1815 a newspaper was started in Ovid called *The Patriot*. It was succeeded two years later by *The Ovid Gazette*, which in 1838 was changed to *The Ovid Bee*. Besides *The Ovid Bee* there were, for a short time, *The Republican* and later *The Ovid Independent*. The name *Ovid Bee* was changed back to *The Ovid Gazette* in 1894, and finally in 1901 the *Gazette* and the *Independent* consolidated to form the present newspaper. *The Ovid Gazette and Independent*.

Two items in the Ovid paper of 1848 are rather interesting. In October of that year was the following notice:

Those of our subscribers who are paying their subscriptions in fire wood, will please bring the wood to this office at once.

In November:

Mrs. Lysander Wilson sent a crock of butter to be applied on her subscription to THE OVID BEE.

The Interlaken newspapers were started later, since the town itself came into being later than Ovid. The first paper, *The Seneca County Sentinel*, was started in 1863 and lasted till 1866. Then, starting in 1867, *The Seneca Evening Journal* was published for just a year. After that there was no newspaper put out in the village till T. P. Hause, who had been with *The Ovid Independent* for nine years, moved to Farmer and in July 1887 founded *The Saturday Morning Review*. This later was called *The Farmer Review*, and when the name of the village was changed, *The Interlaken Review*.

Mr. Hause continued to publish this paper till his death 42 years later. *The Interlaken Review* has remained in much the same form under various editors. All the early newspapers, however, had pages nearly twice the size of those in our present papers, and in most of them the front pages contained stories, while the national and local news were on the inside pages.

## Chapter 6

### SHELDRAKE COVE

In the picture of Sheldrake Cove on the back cover, the Harris and Thomas steam saw mill stands out conspicuously. This supplied lumber for building boats and houses, and for shipping; it did a thriving business for many years. Along the side of it is a canal boat being built, and on the lake the *Kate Morgan* is puffing along.

The shed at the right of the picture was used for storing lumber. The building behind it is the one at the corner where the same Harris and Thomas ran their store. Between this store and the sawmill was a group of buildings which were on what was called the "Barn Lot." Next to the store was a shed in which traders could tie their horses. Then a shoemaking shop run by Jarvis Bryant. Below that was a barn, which shows plainly in the picture. This barn was later moved up behind Scott Harris' house (at the north-west corner where Sheldrake road turns up along the cliff). It is the same barn that was later moved a little farther up the hill, and made into the cottage ("The Playhouse") now owned by the Boynton family.

Back of this barn, in the picture, is the hotel and below that a storehouse. In the background, against the trees, are barns and a boathouse. This picture was made in 1858.

## SHELDRAKE AT ITS HEIGHT

On a map printed in 1874, inside front cover, Sheldrake is quite a village. The population then was 168.

We will start with the house of J. F. Bennett and we see who are the various inhabitants.

Bennett was the son of Lucius Bennett the builder, and was himself a builder of houses and also of canal boats. The canal boats were built on the cove down by the steamboat landing. Bennett's house is the white house, which for nearly fifty years, has belonged to the Sandy family. Bennett and his son Wirt later built the present house just east of the first. Wirt Bennett and his family lived in this house. The Bennetts also built Scott Harris' house, and others in the vicinity.

On the corner Scott Harris, son of John Harris, lived. Opposite was Nelson Young's widow, then next, J. Craven. This John Craven moved later to the house formerly occupied by John Tillyer and, in this map, by F. M. Finch. Mrs. Matthews later occupied the house of John Craven.

The next house was built by Sidney Griffin, who was evidently quite a character. He was unable to read and earned his living by doing various odd jobs. One of them was selling a set of religious book, with two volumes called "The Pillar of Fire." Practically every house in Sheldrake bought a set.

Griffin later moved to New Jersey and his house was bought by Ephraim Hodge, a shoemaker, and was moved to his land, the field above the church.

The next house along the road, now known as "Orchard Lodge," was built by Robert Mason, an Englishman. He was a carpenter and had a large family.

Then came John J. Covert; he was an important man in the village. Not long after the time of this map he married Mrs. Harris, who lived across the street. They then enlarged the house to its present size. About the only outside change in the house since then is the removal of a cupola from the top. Mrs. Harris was the widow of John Harris who, with Waterman Thomas, formerly had the warehouse, sawmill and corner store.

On the corner next to Covert was the store and post-office. This was a busy place. It was run by Scott and Ed Harris, sons of John Harris. This store supplied a variety of useful goods. Entering the front door the post-office occupied the corner on the left, in the large room which was the en-



tire first floor. Behind the post-office was a long counter of dry goods. In the center of the room was a table of kitchen ware. All along the right side was a counter for foods and canned goods. Upstairs was a storeroom which was reached by a trap door.

Opposite Mason's lived James Griffin, a brother of Sidney. He had a little house, the front part of the house now occupied by the Williamsons. Next to the road, just south of his house, was his store. This was for a time a shoe shop, and later a butcher shop. Later still it was a grocery store. Some years after this time the store was moved back of and adjoining the house, in which position it still remains.

Next to James Griffin's lived J. Moore, who ran the sawmill on the cove. Moore's son married the daughter of Benjamin F. Smith, who lived up the hill beyond the wagon shop in the 1852 map. The Smith house in recent years has been owned by the Mackeys.

Back of Mrs. Harris' on the corner lived Ed. Harris, who with his brother ran the store and post-office. The Harris house is now the VanSickles'. Next was Peter Fish, who owned the Gothic house which had been built for Waterman Thomas and is now Dunwoody's. At that time Waterman Thomas had sold all his interests at Sheldrake and moved to Michigan. Peter Fish was born near Montour Falls but moved to Sheldrake when a young man. He owned a great deal of property around Sheldrake, but lived here only a short time, if at all. Most of his life he lived at Kidders in the house now owned by Diedrich Willers. His house there was admired for its attractiveness, as it was covered with a profusion of vines — wisteria, honeysuckle and moonflowers; and along the fence in front were trumpet vines. In July, 1899, *The Ladies' Home Journal* printed a picture of this cottage in a prize contest for attractive house. Peter Fish died at his home in Kidders in 1905 at the age of 93.

Next to the Gothic house lived Mrs. Ann Blew. She was the widow of J. S. Blew and the mother of the large family, many of whom have descendants still at Sheldrake. Mrs. Blew moved to that house when the 200 acres of the J. S. Blew estate were sold to Leverich and Company. This house of Mrs. Blew's had been built for Isaac Covert and his son Will, who sold it to Mrs. Blew. Notice on this map the name "Blew" has been substituted for "Blue." The older sons of J. S. Blue for some reason decided that "Blew" was a better spelling.

The Methodist Church was moved down the hill to its present location in 1869, because most of its parishioners lived nearer the lake. At that time it was enlarged to the size it remained till struck by lightning and burned in 1919. At the time it was moved down the pastor was Rev. N. M. Wheeler. He built, in 1869, the house later known as the "Bass Covert House" along Cliff Road; he lived there during his years of preaching at the Sheldrake Church. Bass Covert, a retired cigar manufacturer from Buffalo.

(and who was no relation to the other Coverts in Sheldrake), bought the house from Wheeler. It is now owned by the Oldenburgs.

Some years after the church was moved, about 1883, Rev. Fisher was the minister. Dominie Fisher's wife, being artistically inclined, was chosen to paint a picture to adorn the wall back of the pulpit. She made no charge for her services, but the congregation held a few sociables which earned enough money to buy the canvas and paints needed. This picture, showing the earth with heaven and its golden streets above, made an interesting background for the minister during services, till destroyed when the church burned. The church, all through its early years, was open year round, and in 1876 had a membership of 45. Peter Sherman, in his will, left a legacy of \$1,000, the interest to be used for the church. After the original church burned in 1919, the Glenwood Chapel on Dr. Haines' property, being no longer needed there, was moved to the site of the Sheldrake church, and makes a very attractive gathering place.

In 1871 the Cayuga Railroad Company built a railroad along the east side of the lake, between Ithaca and Cayuga Bridge. Six years the Lehigh Valley took over the road, which was used till abandoned a few years ago. Since then the railroad runs only north from Ithaca to the Milliken Electric Station, and south from Auburn to Aurora.

From the cove, on the map, an inlet is shown. All the ground between the houses along the road and the cove, and north almost to the lake, was marshy, and this inlet was deep enough for rowboats. It is said this creek was diverted somewhat from its original course, to lead to the Harris Brothers' store. In that way one could get into a boat at the store and row down to the sawmill, or to the dock to board the steamers.

Starting now at the other end of the map, Judge F. M. Finch, of Ithaca, owned the house which was later the south wing of the big Cram house. The Finches were probably the first people to come to the immediate vicinity of Sheldrake as summer residents.

Next to the Finches lived Mrs. VanLiew, widow of the canal boat man. By the creek was the parsonage; it was located between the well which is still in the middle of the garden now there and the creek. About 1878 this parsonage was moved to its present location just above the church.

Across the creek from where the parsonage stood, was a blacksmith shop and adjoining it a wagon shop. These were run by Sherman Dennis, who lived in the house across the road.

The hotel was smaller then than it was later. The dining room was under the main rooms and could be entered from outside or by a stairway from the office. Back of the office was a bar. The present long wing on the east was added later. "Billy" Hatch, one of the proprietors at the time of this map, was a genial host, and ran the hotel for some time after the partner-



ship of Stewart and Hatch was dissolved. Before coming to the Sheldrake House, Hatch was steward on board the steamer *T. D. Wilcox*. Walter B. Emmons occupied the house built by Cadmus, below the hotel.

The boathouse on the shore was later moved up next to the Emmons cottage and used for a barn for the hotel.

In the house at the foot of the hill, now occupied by the Swarthouts, lived Mrs. Esther Brown. She was a sister of Horatio Palmer of the 1852 map. Next to her was the house occupied by John K. Bryant, father of Ed Bryant who later built farther up the hill.

The "Town Hall," — also called formerly the "Session Hall" and the "Opera House" — was built for a social gathering place. The nearby inhabitants donated money for the materials, and all the men around helped to build it. Many social events used to occur there throughout the year: concerts, parties, traveling shows, and meetings; and even for a while a private school was held there. The building was put up in the early 1800's. The earliest official record of it is dated April 1, 1846, when Varnum Stacy and his wife Mary Ann deeded the property on which the building stands to the "Trustees of the Sheldrake Lecture Room and their successors in office — Consideration \$10." This deed covers little more than the land on which the building stands and the land in front to the road.

The curtain on the Town Hall stage is painted in a similar style to the one formerly in the church, and was done by Art Chadwick, a former resident of Interlaken. The other side of the curtain also has a painting, more modern, of an interior, for the use of plays needing a background. The one by Chadwick represents the village of Sheldrake, somewhat imaginative but interesting. A niche each side of the stage was decorated with paintings of a figure, but time has gradually worn these away.

Beyond the church on the map, is the cemetery. Our original Sheldrake resident, Peter Sherman, is buried there, and his epitaph is characteristic of many of the old ones:

Asleep in Jesus. Oh! how sweet,  
From which none ever wake to weep.  
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.  
A soldier of the Revolution.

Another epitaph, on the grave of a little boy named Silcox, reads thus:

Our little Charley.  
Bud of finest promise  
Nipped in early bloom  
Flown from earthly sorrow  
Joined the heavenly throng.

But the prize is on the stone for Jonathan Thomas and his wife Nancy.



evidently patterned after the epitaph on Shakespeare's grave:

Well and young as you pass by  
As you are now so once was we.  
As we are now, so you will be.  
Prepare for death and follow us.





TWO VIEWS OF THE CAYUGA LAKE HOUSE



## Chapter 8

### THE HOTELS

Mr. Cornelius Rapelye, and his brother-in-law, Mr. Jas. S. Burroughs, came to Kidders in July, 1872, for a vacation. They and their families were so taken with the locality that they bought a house, which they called "Glenwood Lodge," for the use of both families for a summer home. Glenwood Lodge had been built a few years before by Judge Hadley of Waterloo.

A year later, Mrs. Rapelye, feeling as did Mrs. Peter Sherman years before, that there should be a Sunday School in the community, started one which met each Sunday during the summer on the cottage porch, and in the winter at the home of Mrs. Carrie Coleman.

By 1879 the Sunday School had increased to 30 or 40 pupils so they decided to erect a separate building for its use. This was built on the north end of the Rapelye lot and was financed by Mr. and Mrs. Rapelye, aided by contributions from friends and residents in the vicinity. It was a Union Chapel, and was called "Glenwood Chapel."

The Rapelyes and Burroughs had so many friends whom they wanted to introduce to the beauties of Cayuga Lake, that they, with Mr. Charles Leverich, decided to put up a hotel. So they arranged with Peter Fish, who was a second cousin of Mr. Leverich, to buy the 200 acres of land of Mrs. Ann Blew; this having been accomplished, the hotel was built, and in July 1875 it was formally opened to the public. The building was four stories high, with a tower in each corner and a long piazza across the east front, and was called "The Cayuga Lake House."

David Wright, son-in-law of Mrs. Ann Blew, was one of the partners in the company for a while, and he lived in the J. S. Blew farm house and took charge of the farm, supplying milk and vegetables for the hotel. In 1878 Wright sold his interest, and W. H. Boyer went on the farm and ran it for about 40 years. Mr. Boyer built the ponds up in the field, for a water supply for the cattle. These ponds later became a water hazard for the hotel golf course.

Long before the Cayuga Lake House was built, the hotel at Kidders was a popular resort. Built in 1852 it was run first by H. C. Tracy, then M. R. Cole, and later by Myron Coleman, a nephew of Cole. This was more of a family hotel, and people would return there each summer, occupying the same rooms year after year. In another way too it was a family hotel, for Cole and his family and nephew comprised most of the working force of the establishment. Myron Coleman ran the bar, which was located in the south front end of the house. He was a great favorite with the guests, particularly the young ladies, for he was a bachelor who danced well, sailed well, and

owned a spirited horse and up-to-date buggy. After Cole died, Myron Coleman ran the hotel for many years as sole proprietor. The grove in front of this hotel, where chairs rocked and hammocks swung, was popular with the guests, and with the ferry boat and steam-boats coming and going there was plenty of interest.

In August 1884, the newspaper *Ovid Independent* said: "There is no more inviting looking spot along Cayuga Lake than Coles' Hotel at Kidders Ferry. It is not strange that the house is filled with summer boarders."

Between Kidders and the Cayuga Lake House several summer homes had been built. A. C. Taylor had a home, as did also Mr. and Mrs. Charles Leverich with Mrs. J. D. Bradford and her daughters, all of New York City. H. H. Westinghouse later bought the Taylor house. Dr. M. L. Haines, who later occupied the Rapelye place, first came to Kidders in 1874 by way of the *Polly Ann*. He was met at the dock by Mrs. Rapeley's niece who afterward became Mrs. Haines. A newer house, occupied by Dr. Haines' daughter, Mrs. MacDonald, is now on that location. The Westinghouse place, much the same, is now St. Fidelis Friary of the Capuchin Fathers.

By 1897 the Cayuga Lake House, open from June to October, was a well known and popular summer resort. It had proved so popular that an addition was built, extending it toward the south, making the building twice as large as before. One August day of that year as many as 95 new guests arrived. The hotel could now accommodate 300.

*The Waterloo Observer* of June 4, 1879, printed the following ad:

### SUMMER RESORT!!

—:o:—

### CAYUGA LAKE HOTEL

Sheldrake, on Cayuga Lake,  
will open, June 16.

John E. Allen takes pleasure in announcing to his former patrons and all in search of health or pleasure, that the above popular Summer Resort, enlarged and newly refitted, offers increased attractions, and will be conducted in the same liberal manner that so deservedly distinguished it last season.

No Malaria!

No Dampness!

No Mosquitos!

Drainage Perfect!

Accommodation for 350 Guests!

Cuisine Unsurpassed!

Prices Low!





**CAYUGA LAKE HOTEL, SHELDRAKE, N. Y.**

## *SUMMERING AT SHELDRAKE.*

**W**ITH each return of our sultry summers, commences the hegira of city and village residents towards the numerous Watering-Places and rural resorts of sea-board and interior. This change, if it be in the right direction, affords an exquisite relief from poisonous air, business cares, and the dust and din of the city, and when once experienced is not easy afterward to forego. To thousands it is the joy and health harvest of the year. But thousands more, not having learned the art of selection, fail to find what they seek, and return to their homes disappointed and dissatisfied. Often they have merely followed in the wake of a fashionable crowd, without having taken the pains to discover where they might be sure of cool, fresh air, pure water, healthful surroundings, and a round of amusements that would not become wearisome. It is our present intention to point out one spot where all the essential requisites for a delightful summer vacation may be found in profusion. The place of which we speak is

### **SHELDRAKE-ON-CAYUGA,**

situated on highlands overlooking Cayuga Lake, which is the largest of the Central New York chain of inland lakes, and is named from the powerful tribe of the Cayugas who dwelt along its eastern shore. Its waters are of the "deepening, darkening, beautiful blue," characteristic of these land-locked lakes, and are surrounded by high, rolling bluffs and uplands and a rich farming country, the garden of the state. Its shores abound in romantic

ravines and the most picturesque scenery. Summer homes, occupied by city residents, line its shores in all directions, and every available spot is held at fancy prices by the rural owners, who find the rocky glen now more valuable than an equal area of the best farming land.

### **THE CAYUGA LAKE HOTEL.**

In 1878, the management of the above hotel was placed in the hands of Mr. John E. Allen, the Proprietor of the Osborne House, Auburn, N. Y. From the spring opening until closed in September, the demand for accommodations was so great that many were turned away for lack of room. At the urgent request of Mr. Allen, and encouraged by the brilliant success of the experiment under his management, the proprietors in 1879 entered upon a plan of enlargement beyond anything of the kind heretofore attempted. Elaborate plans and specifications were drawn up and the capacity of the Cayuga Lake Hotel so increased, by the addition of 75 handsomely fitted and furnished rooms, that it can now accommodate over 350 guests. The natural advantages and healthfulness of the location are unsurpassed. There is perfect drainage and no malaria, no dampness and no mosquitoes.

### **THE DINING ROOMS:**

On the first floor of the house and fronting on the lake is one of the pleasantest dining rooms any where to be found. It is 175 feet in length by 30 in width. Low French windows open direct-





ly upon the piazza, giving the full benefit of the lake view and the lake breezes. A new kitchen has also been erected, entirely detached from the main building, thus obviating the odor which attends even the most delicate processes of cookery.

Many rooms on the first floor are especially devoted to those who cannot undergo the fatigue of going up and down stairs, thus making it a particularly desirable resort for invalids, who speedily find returning strength in the pure air, refreshing lake breezes, and congenial society always to be found at the Cayuga Lake Hotel.

The Hotel is luxurious in all its appointments, the *cuisine* unsurpassed, and the tables furnished daily with fresh cream and vegetables from the extensive farm connected with the Hotel.

#### ATTRACTIONS.

Among the attractions of this favorite resort may be mentioned the Billiard and Pool Parlors, Bowling Alley, Archery and Croquet Grounds, exploring the famous Glens and Ravines, drives to localities of interest in the neighborhood, &c., &c.

#### BOATING.

The facilities for Boating are unequalled, the hotel possessing a fleet of 20 new boats, fitted up with every convenience and in the most approved style. A new and commodious Steam Yacht belonging to the Hotel will be at the service and pleasure of the guests at all times, and will ply between Cayuga and Sheldrake for the convenience of the patrons of the house. A new pier ex-

tending 100 feet out into the lake has been constructed this year, at which the largest steamers on the lake may effect a landing.

#### LIVERY.

Carriages and horses, with careful drivers, and saddle horses, may always be obtained at the Livery in connection with the hotel.

#### THE VIEWS

from the grounds and from the large and roomy piazzas include a wide sweep of beautiful country. To the south, Ithaca and the Cornell-University buildings, twenty miles away, may be distinctly seen through the pure, clear atmosphere. Across the lake may be seen the beautiful villages which slope down toward the lake on the eastern shore, including Springport, and Aurora, the home of Hon. E. B. Morgan and seat of Wells College.

JOHN E. ALLEN, of the "OSBORNE HOUSE," Auburn, N. Y., takes pleasure in announcing to his friends and the public generally, and all in search of health or pleasure, that the "CAYUGA LAKE HOTEL," enlarged and newly refitted, offers increased attractions, and will be conducted in the same liberal manner that so deservedly distinguished it last season; and that he will in person cater for the comfort and amusement of his guests.

Every inducement offered to families. Prices of board reduced to meet the demands of the times. Telegraph office in connection with the hotel.

JOHN E. ALLEN.

## HOW TO GET THERE.

**T**O REACH SHELDRAKE, leave New York City in the morning, arrive at the hotel for supper the same evening, or leaving New York City in the evening, reach the hotel the next morning for breakfast, by New York & Erie R. R. to Ithaca, thence by Steamboat on Cayuga Lake to Sheldrake—or cars to Ovid Centre.

Or direct by the Lehigh Valley Railway to Ovid Centre. Or by Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad. Or by New York Central and Hudson River Railway to Cayuga Bridge, thence by Steamboat on the Lake to Sheldrake.

From Rochester, by New York Central and Hudson River Railway to Geneva, thence by Geneva, Ithaca and Sayre Railway to Ovid Centre.

From Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., by North Pennsylvania Railroad, (Lehigh Valley Railroad) direct to Ovid Centre.

N. B.—Ovid Centre is about two miles from Sheldrake. Parties to avoid confusion, would do well to notify the Manager, by Mail or Telegraph, giving ample time to have conveyance to meet them on arrival of trains. The Mail Stage runs in connection with the trains.

Telegraph Office in Hotel. For Terms, etc., address—

Or, OSBORNE HOUSE,  
Auburn, N. Y.

JOHN E. ALLEN,  
CAYUGA LAKE HOTEL,  
Sheldrake, N. Y.





Telegraph office in hotel.

Coach in waiting at Ovid Center Station.  
Lehigh Valley R. R.

For terms address John E. Allen,  
Cayuga Lake Hotel,  
Sheldrake, New York.

Or Osborne House,  
Auburn, New York.  
J. L. Colvin, Clerk, formerly of the New York  
Hotel and Hotel Aubrey, Philadelphia.

A dock on the shore in front of the hotel was much used, and on the lawn the croquet set was illuminated so the guests could play after dark. A tally-ho coach made frequent trips to Farmer Village and the country around. Church services were held in the hotel each Sunday, with ministers of various denominations coming from Trumansburg, Ithaca, and other places.

In 1895 Mr. Leverich thought that many more people would be attracted to the place if some "Springs" could be featured in their ads. So the sulphur springs at Kidders were purchased and a bathhouse was built nearby, in which guests could take hot sulphur baths. This was called "Deer Lick Sulphur Springs," and was located a short distance up the road just north of Kidders Point. Sulphur water was also taken to the hotel for drinking purposes for those who liked it. At this time the Lehigh Valley R. R. was persuaded to change the station name from Sheldrake to Sheldrake Springs.

In 1897 the hotel advertised that beside an orchestra which played throughout the summer, they had engaged a Russian violinist who had played in the court of the Czar. The hotel was "provided with hydraulic passenger elevator and lighted by electricity. Electric bells and fire escapes are also provided." Saturday night hops were held, and many Cornell students came down there for outings. A golf course was laid out north of the hotel, where tournaments were held.

By 1909 the hotel's popularity was on the wane, and it was changed to a sanitarium. The long porch across the front was enclosed with glass, and baths and treatments were installed.

Only a few years later, in 1914, a fire broke out in the big wooden structure, and in a short time the whole building was completely destroyed. Fortunately, only the proprietor and his family were in the house at the time, and they escaped safely from the burning building.

In 1886 Adolphus Goodman, who had been keeping a hotel at East Varick, moved to Sheldrake and bought the Sheldrake House. The following year he built the present long wing on the east. A few years later Goodman

acquired the cottage ("Bida-A-Wee") next east of the hotel to use for his guests. He also built a boathouse on the shore. Later the boathouse was moved over to the side of the road and run as the "Lucky Stone Store" for a few years, a shop in connection with the hotel, selling gas, ice-cream and light snacks, and knick-knacks. This same building was still later moved over by the cove, and is now, with added improvements, the summer cottage of the George Rogalskys of Ithaca.

The Goodmans had the hotel till he died in 1902; then most of the contents were sold at auction, as announced on a still-extant poster. After that the hotel was run by various people; in 1904 it was closed except for the selling of whiskey.

In 1907 the barn on the Cram property, near the creek, burned to the ground. The Sheldrake House barns were across the creek, and the sparks flew over and they also burned. Carpets were put on the roof of the hotel cottage and that was saved. The roof of the hotel dining room wing did catch fire but it was put out before much damage was done.

Another catastrophe hit the Sheldrake House in 1935. That July the dam up Sheldrake Creek burst, letting a flood of water run down over the road and to the hotel property, causing water nearly a foot deep to swirl through the dining room and kitchen part and making it necessary to move the guests to private houses nearby. It was two days before the debris could be cleared away and the place put in order again for use.

For some years John Rease and his wife ran the hotel. They were much liked by all the Sheldrake neighbors. There were various other proprietors for shorter periods: "Pop" Richardson, Walter Stephens, David Urband, and the Harneds.

Like the Cayuga Lake House, business gradually declined at the Sheldrake House, and in 1939 the property was sold to Mrs. Ellen Dunwoody Nester; she and her sister, Mrs. Esther Jacobs, then had a successful International Camp there for several summers. Following the camp, the hotel was turned into apartments, and the rest of the land disposed of in small lots, with the old steamboat landing and an acre of land immediately around it being given to the village of Ovid for use as a park.

The Kidders Hotel still runs its bar, but does not try to take many overnight guests. There are numerous "guest houses" and a few motels in the vicinity, but no regular hotels along the entire west shore of Cayuga Lake.



## Chapter 9

### SHELDRAKE AS A SUMMER RESORT

In 1883 Douglas Boardman and his son-in-law George R. Williams, of Ithaca, bought the Scott Harris house on the corner by the lake, for a summer home. This was named "Silver Strand" and remained in the family for 65 years. It was originally a square house with a cupola, but the new owners took off the cupola and added more rooms and porches, so it became quite changed in appearance. The barn from the cove was above the house, nearer the lake, and a boathouse was built on the shore. For the first few summers that Silver Strand was occupied, the family ate their dinners at the hotel, the charge for each being only 25c a meal!

In 1884 Robert J. Darragh of New York began buying property at Shelldrake. He first bought the Horatio Palmer farm, extending from the ravine on the west, to the Bennett property. On the northeast corner of his land he built an attractive white cottage with a red roof. Back of this a large field was enclosed with a high white fence, and in this Darragh kept some deer. The bridge over the creek up the road was rebuilt, with marble slabs at each end. Darragh was interested in a marble quarry in Vermont, so gave Shelldrake the benefit of his marble interests.

Several years later he bought the Gothic house and the lands adjoining it. He also bought the point property and other lots from Peter Fish. Mr. Fish was getting on in years and was ready to retire from the care of much property.

The warehouse on the point being no longer used, was torn down when Darragh acquired the property. From the beach, and from the field between Bennett's and Williams' was taken over 30,000 loads of gravel and earth (at 10c per load), which was used to fill in the marshy land on the point property. At this time Darragh had elms and maples planted in rows on the point.

The Methodist Church was on land bought by Darragh. He deeded it to the church soon after the purchase. The next year the Rev. Henry Giles, a New York friend of Darragh's, became the minister of the church.

The church and Town Hall were evidently very active in 1880, for in *The Ovid Independent* of that year. April 14th, before the summer visitors had started to come, were the following items:

"SHELDRAKE NOTES: a concert with reading and recitations sandwiched, is to be had in the M. E. Church on the evening of Friday the 16th, in the interest of the Ladies Aid Society. It is under the leadership of Mr. Wood Burlew and Miss Ruth Burr, and gives promise of being a fine entertainment. Admission 10c. We shall be glad to see many there, and then be glad again to see many glad."



"The entertainment given by the young men of Sheldrake and vicinity, on the evening of the 8th, at 'Session Hall,' was largely attended, and is spoken of as a 'real good thing in its line. The proceeds which must have been considerable, are to be used in making the hall more comfortable and inviting. The musical and oratorical talent in this locality is capable of grand developments, and is even now better than the average."

In 1890 Jacob Cram, of New York, wanting a summer home at Sheldrake, bought Judge Finch's property and others adjoining it as far north as Sheldrake Creek. The Finch house was given a large addition, making a fine old English type of house, which stood on the property till 1943, when it was torn down. In the early 1950's two houses were erected on the site, and also the former Cram boathouse was altered to make a home for Lee and Lucy Larkin Hickox. Another house, the one formerly occupied by the VanLiews (later Mrs. Cora Larkin and now the Docharty family) was used by the Crams for servants' quarters. A barn was built back of this smaller house, and a pump house and water tower for providing the buildings with water.

The Crams did a great deal of entertaining and were conspicuous with their fine clothes, and coach of four. Riding horses were kept for the use of their many guests and for fox hunting; many servants were at hand, and a system of bells from each room allowed day and night service. It is said that a guest was free to ask at any time for what he might want from a well-stocked wine cellar. However, in a few years Mr. and Mrs. Cram decided to separate; Mrs. Cram and their son stayed on in the big house which she ran as an inn several years till her death, after which the house gradually fell into decay. Mr. Cram and his second wife occupied it occasionally and also the smaller house for some years.

In 1894 Fred R. Usher of New York, who became interested in Sheldrake through Robert Darragh, to whom he was related, bought the John J. Covert house from John Blew, who then owned it. The Usher family occupied this house for 12 years each summer, then moved to Interlaken where they built a permanent home. The Boyers, who had been on the Cayuga Lake House farm, then moved into the Usher's house at Sheldrake. After the older Boyers died, their daughter Ida lived there for many years, and for part of the time, her sister Mrs. Cora Larkin. Mrs. Larkin's husband, Will, formerly had a blacksmith shop in Townsendville, then moved to Sheldrake, and had a shop on the south-west corner of the Sheldrake four-corners. The spiles for the Sheldrake steamboat landing were made in the Larkin blacksmith shop. Mrs. Larkin moved in with her sister Ida Boyer after her husband's death.

In 1900 S. Duncan Leverich, son of Charles L. Leverich, bought Sheldrake Point from the Darragh estate, Darragh having died in 1894, and

erected two bungalows on the north shore. These he used in connection with the Cayuga Lake House. That same year J. C. Parker bought the farm by the "marble bridge"; and Charles Blaine and Henry Ely bought Darragh's house. The Blaines and Elys then built an addition on the north side of the house, making it suitable for two families, with only the kitchen in common. This house was thereafter known as the "Cliff House." In recent years it was occupied by the Robert Preston family, till the night of January 5, 1961, when a fire completely destroyed the house. The Prestons have now built a new one-story home on the same location.

Farther along the cliff road, was the Bass Covert house, now owned by the Oldenburgs; the cottage of Dr. Edwin Dickinson, and the Wyer houses.

In Sheldrake, on the upper side of the four-corners, the house of the Harrises had been torn down, and C. D. Osborn was running a general store and post-office in the new building. Osborn had formerly been in the Harris Brothers store across the street; this was now used as a storehouse for shipping. Osborn ran a successful store for many years. This building has continued to be a combined store and dwelling house under various people, except for a few years when the International Camp was operating at the hotel, when the store was used for an arts and crafts workshop.

In 1902 the Fitchens built their cottage "Lucky Stone Lodge" on land just west of "Silver Strand," in about the location where the barn had stood. Mrs. Fitchen was the daughter of G. R. Williams in Silver Strand. The former barn was moved farther up the hill, behind Lucky Stone Lodge, and was made over by the Fitchens to use as an overflow for their family and guests (The Playhouse). With sleeping accommodations upstairs, the first floor was one large room with a stage, where amateur theatricals and concerts were often enjoyed. This property was in the Fitchen family as a summer house till after Mrs. Fitchen's death in 1956, (her husband having gone some years earlier), after which it was bought by John and Elizabeth Wells. At the same time, Damon and Mary Boynton and Katherine Finch bought the Playhouse behind it.

In 1904 the people of Farmerville and the Lehigh Valley R. R. decided to change the name of the village. The villagers preferred to be known as a town between the lakes, instead of a farming community. The Lehigh asked the residents to submit names for consideration. Several names were sent in and INTERLAKEN was the one chosen as most fitting.

One advantage of living beside the lake during the summer is the lack of extreme changes in temperature. True, the winds come up suddenly and strongly; but the large expanse of water keeps the temperature more even the year around than even half a mile back from the shore.

Except in the spring months, the prevailing direction of the wind in the Cayuga Lake valley, is from the north-west due principally to the north-



south trend of the lake valley. During the summer months unless the weather conditions are very unfavorable, the south wind sets in a few hours after sunset as a light breeze and gradually increases in strength until a velocity of 8 miles an hour is reached, which continues steadily throughout the night, changing to north-west in mid-morning.

As a rule the seasons here vary but slightly from one year to the next. There have been years, however, that were extreme one way or the other. In 1816 there were snow and ice every month in the year. The corn did not ripen, and grain and fruit were scarce.

In some years past, high water has done much damage, but for the past few years an attempt has been made by the state to give a more uniform level, maintaining a level of about 384 feet above sea level during the summer months, and a minimum level during the winter months of approximately 380 feet. Then, in the spring, when the snows melt and the spring rains come, the water gradually rises to its summer level. If the state is able to keep within these limits the damage to the lake front property will be practically avoided.



## Chapter 10

### SHELDRAKE TODAY

Sheldrake, formerly a shipping village and later a summer resort, now is more of a suburban community. While several families still come here just for the summer, many more are year-round residents, most of the men working in Ithaca or nearer places and commuting by car daily. Since the map of 1874 about the only buildings which have not had a change of name or structure, are the Town Hall, church and hotel.

There would be a great many more houses on a map of today (see inside back cover). Other cottages have been built on the Point, along the cove, and on the former hotel property between the Sheldrake E-W road and Sheldrake Creek. The old steamboat landing is part of a small park belonging to Ovid village.

Of the two first cottages on the point, built by Leverich, the west one was partially destroyed by fire and rebuilt by Dr. Fred Howe, who then owned it, and is now the property of Lillian Shaben. The other of Leverich's cottages, nearer the end of the point, is the same except for improvements. For eight summers during the 1920's this cottage was occupied by the late Louis Agassiz Fuertes, the famous bird artist, and his family. "Uncle Louis," as he was affectionately called, knew all the birds on the point, and was a source of information to the young people, many of whom became much bird minded because of his interest. Uncle Louis' knowledge was not limited to birds: he was interested in animals, in people, and was a most entertaining story-teller. One summer he adopted a family of young skunks. He and Dr. Allen, of Ithaca, promptly treated them so they were harmless and made excellent pets. They were named most appropriately (?) Rose, Heliotrope, Hyacinth, and Cashmere Bouquet.

At the corner by the lake, where the road turns up the cliff, the J. R. Robinsons built a stucco house (Driftwood) in 1913, first used as a summer home, later for the year round. It is now occupied by Earl and Emily Robinson Brust and family. Continuing up along the cliff are several new houses, including Frank C. Baldwin's (Open Waters), and Lyle Brace's, just beyond Lucky Stone Lodge. Below the Brusts', toward the point, is the newest house in the village, that of Stuart and Ellen Fitchen Cooper. Ellen Cooper and Emily Brust represent the fourth generation of a family to live at Sheldrake.

How Sheldrake got its name seems to be difficult to trace. The most logical explanation came from one of the old-time residents; she said the point was a popular place in the old days for hunters to come for ducks, as the sheldrakes (merganser ducks) were prevalent here. So in time Sheldrake Point was a commonly used name and by 1820 it was established.

In 1851 John Delafield noted that

Off Sheldrake Point the water is shallow, the point jutting far out into the lake forms a narrow strip of [loose gravel]. A singular flexibility is attributed to the extreme portions of it by the inhabitants of the neighborhood, who maintain that it shifts its position, curving to the northward or southward as the wind prevails from the one or the other direction.

As all residents of Sheldrake know, the tip of the point *does* shift its position with strong winds.

Another interesting feature of Sheldrake Point, peculiar probably to no other part of the lake, or the other Finger Lakes, is its abundance of lucky stones. These stones are remains of concretions eroded from the nearby shale cliffs and ground smooth by the waves. Long ago, when the rocks of this region gradually hardened, there were worm burrows in the sea muds. As the muds hardened, calcium carbonate was concentrated in knots or concretions around the burrows. The burrows in the concretions, being less resistant, are worn away by the action of the water, leaving smooth round holes through stones of various sizes: "the smaller stone you find, the luckier you are," according to Sheldrake legend. Beneath the cliffs and in the ravines are also many trilobites, corals, clams, and other fossils dating from the Devonian Period (about 350,000,000 years ago).

Compared to those thousands of years, Sheldrake's life is short; but it is sweet. For the place seems to have a universal charm for all of us who live there.

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New York Historical Association Bulletins

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Old maps, and information from many residents of the vicinity of  
Sheldrake and Kidders, all of whom were most co-operative.







Two Views Of The Sheldrake House — See Page 31







Sheldrake Point Cottages — See Page 37



The Sheldrake Store — See Page 35







This Landmark Later Burned As O'Malley's — See Page 29



The Marble Bridge — See Page 33







Two Views Of "Silver Strand" Formerly The Harris House — See Page 33





# SHELDRAKE

0 250 500 750  
FEET



1962



STEAM SAW-MILL AND BOAT-YARD OF HARRIS & THOMAS, SHELDRAKE POINT.

THE COVE, SHELDRAKE (Lithograph of the 1850's)







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